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Statistics not classified by field: follow-up to Economic and Social Council policy decisions

Policy decisions of the Economic and Social Council that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission

Note by the Secretary-General**

Summary

Elements of the policy decisions of the Economic and Social Council adopted in 2002 that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission are provided in the present note, along with an indication of the actions taken and proposed to be taken by the Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division. The Commission may wish to review the actions taken and planned and assess whether they are appropriate in relation to the policy decisions of the Council.

* E/CN.3/2003/1.

** The present report was submitted late with respect to the forecasted submission date according to the slotting system, due to the fact that the Economic and Social Council did not consider the report of the Commission on its thirty-third session until 19 December 2002, during its resumed substantive session of 2002.

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I. Development indicators

Action requested by the Council

1. In its decision 2002/311, the Economic and Social Council took note of the report of the Statistical Commission on its thirty-third session[1] and of the progress report of the Secretary-General on the basic indicators for the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits at all levels (E/2002/53), and requested the Commission to provide a separate comprehensive report on the work related to chapter VI, section E, of the report of the Commission on its thirty-third session and on the basic indicators for the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits at all levels, including the report on indicators on means of implementation to the Council at its substantive session of 2003 for consideration and guidance.

Action taken and proposed by the Commission and the Division

2. The principal relevant responsibility of the Commission in this area is for the coordination of development indicators in the context of the follow-up to United Nations conferences and summits, which is covered under agenda item 6 (b), "Harmonization of indicators and reporting on progress towards the millennium development goals", of the current session. The following action has already been taken by the Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division (see also E/CN.3/2003/21, paras. 4-7). In response to Council resolution 2000/27 in which, inter alia, the Council called for the technical review of existing conference indicators and efforts to define a limited set, and noted the need for so-called "means of implementation" or "global partnership for development" indicators, the Commission, at its thirty-second session, accepted that invitation by the Council to serve as the intergovernmental focal point for the review of conference indicators. In order to ensure that the statistical expertise of member States be fully applied, the Chairman of the Commission appointed a Friends of the Chair advisory group to conduct an in-depth technical evaluation of all United Nations conference indicators. In accordance with the Council mandate, the advisory group reported back to the Commission at its thirty-third session, presenting a detailed technical report on an assessment of the statistical indicators derived from United Nations conferences and summits (see E/CN.3/2002/26), including recommendations for a limited list of indicators and proposals for a mechanism of statistical review for future indicators. The Commission considered that report, together with the report of the Secretary-General on the harmonization of development indicators (E/CN.3/2002/25) and a consultancy report on indicators on means of implementation. Based on the report of the Friends of the Chair and the decisions taken at the thirty-third session of the Commission, the Division prepared a report for the Council on basic indicators for the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits at all levels (E/2002/53).

3. The Commission will have before it as a background paper a draft for the report requested by the Council in its decision 2002/311. The Commission may wish

to comment on the draft and decide on a suitable process to finalize the consolidated report for submission to the Council at its substantive session of 2003.

II. Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system

Action requested by the Council

4. In its resolution 2002/23, the Council called upon its subsidiary bodies to intensify their efforts to mainstream gender perspectives in their work; called upon its subsidiary bodies to continue their efforts to address gender perspectives in relation to the thematic issues of their multi-year programmes of work or in relation to annual themes; called upon the bureaux of its subsidiary bodies to consider how best to facilitate specific gender discussions in their work; and encouraged its subsidiary bodies to increase their collaboration with the Commission on the Status of Women, and encouraged the Commission to continue its efforts to highlight gender perspectives in the work of the Council and its other subsidiary bodies.

Action taken and proposed by the Commission and the Division

5. Gender mainstreaming is reflected in the range of development indicators considered by the Commission in the context of follow-up to the United Nations Millennium Declaration and United Nations conferences and summits, which is covered under agenda item 6 (b) of the current session (see E/CN.3/2003/21). The Division is responsible for the coordination of data collection for the millennium development goals indicators. The database provided by the Division contains data broken down by sex to the extent possible.

III. Further strengthening the Economic and Social Council

Action requested by the Council

6. At the coordination segment of its substantive session of 2002, on the theme "Strengthening further the Economic and Social Council, building on its recent achievements, to help it fulfil the role ascribed to it in the Charter of the United Nations as contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration", the Council decided, in paragraphs 13, 19 and 21 of its agreed conclusions 2002/1, that in the follow-up to United Nations conferences and summits, the Council should continue to ensure the harmonization, coordination and coherence of the agendas and work programmes of the functional commissions by promoting a clearer division of labour among them and providing clear policy guidance to them. Such guidance would enable the Council and its subsidiary machinery to serve as a coherent system to review progress. The functional commissions should further enhance their role as the main forums for expert follow-up and review of United Nations conferences and summits. The Council invited its functional commissions to provide inputs to the overall theme of the Council's coordination and high-level segments as they related to their area of work. The outcomes of the functional commissions should be considered in the general segment of the Council's substantive sessions on the basis

of their reports and the consolidated report on their work, which would identify cross-cutting policy issues, gaps/overlaps, areas of complementarity and cooperation, focus on substantive issues and highlight coordination issues requiring the Council's attention within its coordination segment. The Council called for further efforts by its members, its subsidiary machinery and the Secretariat to ensure greater overall coherence among the reports requested and those presented to the Council, and to streamline its documentation. The Secretariat was invited to submit consolidated reports in response to related mandates. The reports of the functional commissions should focus on substantive issues and highlight coordination, coherence and harmonization issues requiring the Council's attention. The Bureau and the Secretariat should ensure the dissemination of the outcomes of the Council to a broader audience.

Action taken and proposed by the Commission and the Division

7. At its thirty-second session, the Commission accepted the invitation by the Council to serve as the intergovernmental focal point for the review of conference indicators, and considered that work as a welcome opportunity to contribute its technical expertise to the ongoing debate on indicators.[2]

8. In order to promote cooperation in the work of the functional commissions the Commission continues to consider cross-cutting issues. The Commission will have before it a report of the Secretary-General on activities of the Commission for Social Development and their possible implications for the work of the Statistical Commission (E/CN.3/2003/32) and a report of the Secretary-General on the World Summit on Sustainable Development and its possible implications for the work of the Statistical Commission (E/CN.3/2003/33).

9. In July 2002, the chairpersons of the functional commissions held a meeting which representatives of the Division attended as observers. A council panel discussion for the chairpersons of its functional commissions was subsequently held, during which Laszlo Molnar presented the statement of Tamas Mellar, President of the Hungarian Central Statistical Office and Chairman of the Statistical Commission.

IV. Contribution of human resources development, including the areas of health and education, to the process of development

Action requested by the Council

10. At its substantive session of 2002, the Council adopted a ministerial declaration on the contribution of human resources development, including the areas of health and education, to the process of development.

Action taken and proposed by the Commission and the Division

11. The work of the Commission on the harmonization of development indicators and the Millennium Declaration, particularly statistical capacity-building, covered under agenda item 6 (b), is relevant (see E/CN.3/2003/21) in this regard.

12. Statistical capacity-building, including human resources development through workshops and study tours, is an important part of the work programme of the Division. In recent years, the Division has paid increased attention to the field of management, in particular by revising its publication *The Operation and Organization of a Statistical Agency* (the third revision is currently being edited; an unedited version is available at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/statorg/statorg.htm) and holding workshops on various management issues over the last two years. In addition, the Commission extensively discussed statistical capacity-building at its thirty-third session and will discuss the issue again at its current session under agenda item 6 (c), "Statistical capacity-building" (see E/CN.3/2003/23).

V. International Conference on Financing for Development

Action requested by the Council

13. The Council adopted resolution 2002/34 on the International Conference on Financing for Development.

Action taken and proposed by the Commission and the Division

14. At its thirty-third session, the Commission considered, together with the report of the Friends of the Chair (E/CN.3/2002/26) and the report of the Secretary-General on the harmonization of development indicators (E/CN.3/2002/25), a consultancy report or indicators of means of implementation. In compliance with Council decision 2002/311, the requested report will also pay due attention to indicators on means of implementation (see paras. 1-3 above).

15. In connection with the work on the millennium indicators database, the Division will continue to work with experts from the world financial institutions to collect data for millennium development goal No. 8, "Develop a global partnership for development".

Notes

[1] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council 2002, Supplement No. 4* (E/2002/24).

[2] See ibid., *2001, Supplement No. 4* (E/2001/24), para. 45 (a).